

# Bishop Auckland College

## Access and participation plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

### 1. Assessment of performance

Bishop Auckland College is committed to the continuous improvement of all its areas of operation. We are particularly focussed on widening participation and addressing any gaps of under-representation of students in any particular category.

#### Context

Bishop Auckland College is located in south west Durham in a semi-rural location. Qualification levels across County Durham as a whole are below those both regionally and nationally, with 30.2% of adults qualified to NVQ4 or above, north east 31.7% and nationally 38.6%. Earnings are 90% of that elsewhere in the UK and job density at 0.59 is well below the national rate of 0.84, consequently unemployment is higher than the regional and national levels. (NOMIS 2017) Despite the most recent English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 Statistical Release indicating that the north east is in the seventh decile in terms of deprivation, when considered at ward level the College is at the heart of an area with deprivation in the top 10% nationally. This correlates with the findings of the National Collaborative Outreach project which has highlighted the College as being in a cold spot for progression to higher education of young people from disadvantaged wards.

#### Bishop Auckland College

Set within this context, the College has developed its higher education portfolio to offer an articulated progression route in each of its curriculum areas. The semi-rural nature of the area means that public transport arrangements can present a barrier to students wishing to access higher education on a non-residential basis at one of the area's city based universities. The College provides a local solution to this issue and support with transport costs.

Our HE Strategy has a clear focus on delivering high quality professional and technical programmes which clearly align to employer demand and student needs in the North East region. The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) priorities are Innovation, Business Growth and Access to Finance, Skills, Employability and Inclusion, Economic Assets and Infrastructure and Transport and Connectivity. Over the years, Bishop Auckland College's HE provision has increased in size and range and we currently have 163 students studying, 131 full-time (FT) and 32 part-time (PT). In 2019/20 56% of our HE students were female and 44% male. Most (78.3%) of our HE students are mature, aged 21 or over, and the majority of the College's HE students are recruited from widening participation neighbourhoods. As a community based College, 93% of Bishop Auckland College's HE students reside within County Durham, the remaining 7% reside in the neighbouring Tees Valley area. Consequently, Bishop Auckland College ensures that its strategy is fully consistent with the needs of the regional economy by designing and delivering a 'career driven' HE curriculum which focuses on offering and developing a range of undergraduate programmes, including apprenticeships, that support employers in achieving economic growth which in turn, contributes to overall regional and national prosperity.

The College's HE journey has spanned over 20 years, from a franchise agreement with a local university to a direct contract with HEFCE offering a range of HNC/D programmes, to the latest development with validation of two undergraduate degrees by the Open University. Consequently the balance of student numbers between full and part time and 'other undergraduate' and 'undergraduate' has changed in the period since the TEF4 was published. The first cohort of undergraduate students graduated in July 2020. In 2020/21 89% of higher education students are studying full time.

The College is proud of the social and cultural diversity of our community and we are committed to the College being a place where learning and working exists in an environment that advances equality of opportunity, celebrates diversity and allows everyone to achieve their fullest potential. We ensure this

by embedding equality and diversity within all our practices and seek to educate staff, students and the community to both foster good relations and recognise the benefits of a diverse community. As a small to medium size fully vocational FE and HE college, Bishop Auckland College is able to attract a wide range of students to lower level programmes and raise aspirations and develop skills and confidence to enable progression to HE. In recent years the College developed specialist alternative provision for 14-16 year old students at risk of exclusion. Developing this provision enables us to enhance the educational opportunities of a significant number of children, some of whom are from the most disadvantaged wards in County Durham and who would otherwise most likely have failed to achieve either qualifications or economic independence. At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, in the second year of operation, 100% of the year 11 pupils progressed either to further education or employment including to A level provision.

## 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

### Access

#### Students from areas of low higher education participation, lower household income and / or lower socioeconomic status groups

The North East region has one of the lowest HE participation rates (40%) in England as measured by HEIPR. There are 43 disadvantaged wards in the county classified by POLAR 1 and 2 data which are particularly targeted by the College. Only 30.2% of adults in County Durham are qualified to level 4 or above, with 10.1% aged 16-64 having no qualifications. Bishop Auckland College recruits approximately 100 new HE students each year, to a range of first degree and other undergraduate programmes studied both FT and PT, with 78% of the student population being mature. Therefore, when data is disaggregated by mode of study, age as well as level of study (first degree or other undergraduate) datasets become relatively small. Consequently, relatively small variations in numbers from one year to the next represent quite large percentage variations that, taken alone, can present a misleading picture.

The College has an excellent track record of providing accessible higher education for all students. The latest published TEF data released in October 2018 has been used to provide the following analysis. Using POLAR data; 32% full time and 33% part-time students are from Quintile 1 neighbourhoods (32% overall), compared to 11-12% nationally; 42% full time and 29% part time students are from Quintile 2 neighbourhoods (38% overall); 10% full time and 14% part-time students are from Quintile 3 neighbourhoods (12% overall). This reflects the 'local' nature of the student cohort and the demographic of this particular area in County Durham. The data shown below is extracted from the October 2018 TEF metrics and highlights an increase in recruitment of 11% from 2017 with the total proportion of students from POLAR 1 and 2 remaining constant. The College is located in a POLAR 1 area with the norm being 21.4% of young people progressing to higher education; the College is performing well in this context.

IMD data for the whole student cohort again highlights a greater proportion of students from areas of high deprivation and low higher education participation with 75% of students coming from the two highest areas of deprivation on the IMD.

In terms of Access – there is no gap that needs to be addressed and Bishop Auckland College's action in this area is to maintain its impressive track record in attracting and recruiting from disadvantaged areas.

		Full-time	% of total	Part-time	% of total	Total	
POLAR	1	10	32%	5	33%	15	32%
	2	15	42%	5	29%	20	38%
	3	5	10%	5	14%	5	12%
	4	5	10%	5	14%	5	12%
	5	0	7%	0	10%	5	6%

National IMD	1	25	39%	45	33%	70	35%
(English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation)	2	20	28%	40	31%	60	30%
	3	10	14%	20	16%	30	16%
	4	10	17%	20	16%	30	16%
	5	0	3%	5	5%	10	4%

### Success

Continuation – Having recruited a high number of disadvantaged students, Bishop Auckland College is focussed on ensuring they are retained. TEF4 data indicates that a gap exists, 12.3% between continuation of the most (71%) and least disadvantaged students (83.3%). Internally produced data which covers the subsequent years indicates that the full time continuation rate has improved to 80% in 2019/20. The data illustrates that the main challenge for the College is in removing barriers to continuation for students from disadvantaged groups to close the gap in continuation/pass rate. Moving forward, the College will capture and record student performance data by POLAR area to monitor and address any gaps between student groups that may arise. A key factor affecting the continuation rate of students from low participation neighbourhoods, as well as those from disadvantaged wards, are not course specific in the majority of cases, but are linked to wider socioeconomic issues. A significant factor that influences students to leave their course of study, is the opportunity of employment or advancement in their current job role. Given the high proportion of students from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas across County Durham and the subsequent high number of students from these areas enrolled at the College, the importance of ensuring that the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups is as close to zero as possible and above the national rate (4.4% nationally), is a high priority for the College. As a result of this evaluation Bishop Auckland College has set itself a target for improving retention for all students including a focus on FT disadvantaged students as set out below.

### Attainment

Attainment represents a measure of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. 2019/20 was the first year in which Bishop Auckland College students completed the final year of a first degree programme. The cohort was small, however attainment was very good with 50% first class and 33% upper second. As the cohort was so small (6 students) analysis by polar quintile is not statistically significant.

### Progression to employment or further study

The TEF4 data highlights a performance gap in the progression to employment or further study of full time students from POLAR Q1 and Q2 areas of -9.2% and of -3% for part time students. The College has refocussed its careers information advice and guidance resource to ensure students are supported to make the next step. The College has set itself a target of improving positive progression rates for all its students to at least national benchmarks. There is however the consideration of the high unemployment rate in the north east of 6.4% which is the second highest in the country further exacerbating the difficulty of moving into employment.

		POLAR Q1 or Q2		POLAR Q3 Q4 Q5		National IMD Q1 or Q2 Q3 Q4 or Q5	
Employment or further study	Full time	86.4	N	97.3	91.7		

	POLAR Q1 or Q2	POLAR Q3 Q4 Q5	National IMD	
			Q1 or Q2	Q3 Q4 or Q5
Part time	90	N	93.2	95.7

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students The North East has the second lowest BAME population in England (4.7% based on the 2011 census) and within County Durham only 1.6% of the population are from ethnic minorities. Bishop Auckland College's BAME population is highly dependent on the local demographic as 93% of its HE students come from County Durham. Small cohort sizes across the College's HE provision result in very small numbers for individual ethnic groups within the broader BAME categorisation.

### Access

Ethnicity		Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Ethnicity	White	65	100%	130	97%	195	98%
	Black	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Asian	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Other	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Unknown	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%

The proportion of students from BME communities has decreased to 2.3% in 2019/20 from a high of 5.2% in 2017/18. The actual student numbers are very small, (3 in 2019/20, 7 in 2017/18) however numbers are broadly representative of the demographic make-up of the area; County Durham residents are predominantly mono cultural with 98% identifying as white British. The College actively promotes equality of opportunity which is reflected in the College's Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2019/20 which includes;

- Analysis of destination data for BME students following focussed individual support from guidance staff to improve positive destination outcomes.
- Representation at all focus groups from protected characteristic learners

### Success

As the numbers are small the data was suppressed in the TEF4 release however internal data shows that the continuation / retention rate for BAME students for the 2017/18 to 2019/20 period is shown below. Bishop Auckland College will maintain a focus on BAME students in its activities to support students on course.

Ethnicity		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Ethnicity	Non BAME	127	79.5%	138	77.5%	126	81%
	BAME	7	57.1%	8	100%	3	100%

## Attainment

Attainment represents a measure of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. 2019/20 was the first year in which Bishop Auckland College students completed the final year of a first degree programme. There were no BAME students within the very small first degree cohort.

The range of other undergraduate programmes offered by Bishop Auckland College culminate in a pass to proceed or pass fail grade. These are recorded as achievement rates as shown in the table below. Although the number of students in the BAME cohort is very small, achievement rates have exceeded those of non BAME students for the previous two years. In terms of attainment of BAME students there is no performance gap.

		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Ethnicity	Non BAME	127	74.8%	138	72.5%	126	73.8%
	BAME	7	42.9%	8	75%	3	100%

## Progression to employment or further study

Due to very small numbers of non-white students, TEF4 data for employment or further study for BAME students is also non-reportable. As discussed above, BAME cohort sizes are very small making any comparison data non-statistically significant but Bishop Auckland College will closely monitor progression of BAME students.

## 1.3 Mature students

### Access

Bishop Auckland College typically recruits more mature students (aged 21 and over) than young students (under 21). Internal records indicate that mature students have dominated the make-up of the College's higher education cohort since the provision began. Mature students dominate the PT mode at 85% based on TEF4 metrics (see Table below).

		Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Age	Under 21	30	47%	20	15%	50	26%
	21 to 30	25	36%	50	38%	75	38%
	Over 30	10	17%	65	47%	75	37%

Despite the decline in mature students nationally the College continues to see an increase year on year in recruitment of students over the age of 21. Programmes are designed to develop students and support them in their career progression with clear links to employment sectors. They are equally accessible and appropriate to younger students, however many are adults returning to education following a break in learning.

## Success

Continuation - TEF4 data highlights that continuation is a performance gap for Bishop Auckland College for both age groups. FT young students at 70.8% is -9.6 from the benchmark while continuation for FT mature students is -5.3 from the benchmark at 78.4%. There were insufficient students in the PT cohort for data to be published. Continuation rates present a performance gap across the various strata of data analysis.

	Age	
	Young	Mature
Full time	70.8	78.4
Part time	NA	NA

## Attainment

Attainment represents a measure of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. 2019/20 was the first year in which Bishop Auckland College students completed the final year of a first degree programme. The cohort was small however attainment was very good with 50% first class and 33% upper second. All students in the cohort were mature.

As recruitment to the first degree programmes increases analysis of attainment levels will become more statistically significant.

## Progression to employment or further study

Older students, both full and part time, achieved more positive progression results than younger students. There is a performance gap for younger FT students of -5.9 when compared to the benchmark and a gap of -4.8 for PT young people and -2.3 for PT mature students. The gaps are not considered significant, however, more focussed involvement of CEIAG staff with students throughout their programmes, will help develop clear progression routes and support with career planning.

	Age	
	Young	Mature
Full time	90	100
Part time	92.2	95.6

## 1.4 Disabled students

As for ethnicity described above, small cohort sizes across the College's HE provision result in very small numbers for types of disability such as mental health or physical impairment. The small numbers result in non-statistically significant data and, where data is available for disaggregated groups, this has the potential to identify individuals. Accordingly, the following evaluation of performance is not more specific in these areas.

## Access

		Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Disability	Yes	10	12%	10	9%	20	10%
	No	60	88%	120	91%	180	90%

The proportion of students with a disability has remained constant at 12.6% in 2017/18 to 12.4% in 2019/20. The proportion of disabled students on part time programmes is higher as shown in the TEF4 data table above however as the balance of provision shifts towards full time this is likely to change.

The College holds the Equality Gold Standard and won the Equality North East Award for Education and Training Organisations and also the Outstanding Practice Award for Equality and Diversity in 2017. The Equality and Diversity Committee monitors performance in all aspects of access, achievement and progression. A performance gap analysis is carried out annually by curriculum area and an action plan devised to address any gaps in performance. This is reviewed at Corporate Board level.

- 100% of staff hold a level 2 qualification in Equality and Diversity
- 70 staff hold the Certificate Understanding Specific Learning Difficulties
- The College provides a counselling service for students
- Study support is available through the Learning Resource Library and Study Support staff on demand

### Success

There is a positive performance gap between continuation of disabled and nondisabled students in the TEF4 dataset. Continuation rates for full time disabled students are +6.4 when compared with the benchmark and +1.6 for part time students. Bishop Auckland College is proud of its performance in this area and will continue to support disabled students and monitor retention.

### Attainment

There are no statistically significant gaps between attainment of disabled and non-disabled students in the internal dataset. Bishop Auckland College is very proud of its performance in this area and will continue to support disabled students and monitor achievement.

### Progression to employment or further study

Part time disabled students progressed particularly well in terms of highly skilled employment and further study (+1.2 when compared to the benchmark). There is no significant performance gap for disabled students in terms of progression to employment or further study. Support will continue to be provided to help all students progress to employment or further study. Part time disabled students performed better than students with no disability in this measure.

		Disabled	
		Yes	No
Full time		N	0.3
Part time		-1.5	-3.6

## 1.5 Care leavers



Bishop Auckland College does not have current data on care leavers within the College on higher education courses. Consequently Bishop Auckland College has agreed a commitment to establish a robust mechanism of identifying and recording care leavers, providing ongoing support to this highly under-represented student group and monitoring both student and College performance in this area. The College does collect information relating to care leavers in its further education provision through its student support section. This information will be gathered for HE students through the recruitment process and recorded in the learner information management system. The DfE and Centre for Social Justice sector target of between 0.1-0.2percent for the 19-21 year old student population would be exceeded if the College recruits 1 care leaver per year – representing 0.5% of the College’s FT HE students. The College will aim for continuation, attainment and progression of care leavers to equal that of the mean HE student population, noting that the very small cohort numbers are likely to make specific care leaver data non-statistically significant.

## **1.6 Intersections of disadvantage**

### Access

Bishop Auckland College recruits marginally more females than males, in 2019/20 56% females and 44% males were enrolled. The data contained in the APP dataset is not statistically significant however internal data indicates a gap of 1.3% in retention between females and males. The TEF 4 data indicates a -15.6 performance gap for females when compared to the benchmark. The gap for males is smaller at -2.1. Continuation, as previously stated is a performance gap for the College.

### Progression

TEF4 data suggests that FT females are significantly more likely to progress to employment or further study than males, +7.5%, PT females are also more likely to progress than males, +9.5%. There is a positive performance gap for FT females when compared with the benchmark +4.8 whereas males have a negative performance gap, -2.5, however in both cases the gap is not statistically significant. The smaller cohorts at Bishop Auckland College do not provide statistically significant data. However, the College is of the opinion that the progression gaps will be treated as significant; improving positive destinations is a key area of work for the College.

## **1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education**

### 1. Gender

Bishop Auckland College is actively working to overcome gender stereotypes within key industry professions in order to help create a more gender diverse workforce. The engineering area contributes with targeted interventions aimed at supporting more women into the traditionally male dominated engineering industries via initiatives aimed at secondary school age females. At these events local schools are invited into College, where female students can undertake hands on activities, in order to help change perceptions and potentially inspire girls to consider careers within these industries. A similar scheme has been actioned within the Health and Social Care and Early Years curriculum areas in order to encourage more young males to consider careers in the early years and health care sectors.

Mental Health and Wellbeing – Bishop Auckland College employs an emotional resilience nurse to provide support to students. The College provides a counselling service for staff and students. The student counselling service is provided by students on the College’s BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling programme. This provides them with an opportunity to gain the practice hours they need in order to qualify.



## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

Bishop Auckland College's aspiration for higher education, as articulated in its strategic plan, is to provide opportunities for local access to higher education. The College believes this is critical in addressing the economic challenge of increasing the supply of higher-level skills to meet local, and wider, labour market needs. Situated as it is, in a semi-rural area of significant disadvantage, the College provides an accessible higher education option for students from lower higher education participation, low household income and lower socio economic status groups. The College vigorously promotes equality of opportunity and has a long and successful reputation as a widening participation college, for students of all ages and academic levels.

The College contributes to social and economic well-being, changing lives for the better by enabling people of all abilities to fulfil their potential in work and in the community, through high quality professional, technical and general education. We will work to eliminate gaps in equality of opportunity throughout the College's student lifecycle. The College's HE strategic objectives reflect this ambition:

- to enable students to aspire, succeed and progress through providing the highest quality HE learning opportunities in an environment which is both supportive and challenging;
- to develop an innovative, responsive curriculum that meets the needs of the local and regional economy, with all programmes designed and delivered in partnership with a range of employers and key stakeholders;
- to maintain and develop accommodation and resources to support a distinctive, high quality HE experience;
- through the continuous development of our HE curriculum, enable students to meet current and future demands within the labour market and support our students to access opportunities to develop higher level skills which contribute to the economy;
- to grow our HE provision and student numbers through widening participation (WP), targeted advice and guidance and provide clear progression opportunities for young people and adults into HE;

This ambition has been achieved, in part, with the HE student population dominated by mature students; the majority of the student body comes from low participation neighbourhoods and disabled and BAME student numbers are in line with the local demographic. However, increasing disabled and BAME applications will be a target as the College believes it supports these students well to achieve good outcomes. Year 4 TEF data confirms that continuation for students from low participation neighbourhoods and also females is an area for focus. The College works hard to retain its students and indicates benchmark or above benchmark retention for key underrepresented groups including BAME and disabled students. Critical evaluation of performance across the student lifecycle has identified gaps in performance for continuation and progression of students from low participation neighbourhoods as well as a potential gap in access for care leavers, for which data has not been collected.

### 2.2 Target groups

Our critical evaluation of performance has identified the target groups identified in Table 3.

Although the College achieves in excess of the benchmarks as shown in TEF4 data, the College has aspirations to increase these positive gaps further for BAME students (PTA\_1), disabled students (PTA\_2) and to capture information in order to be able to report on care leavers and meet recruitment levels in line with DfE and social justice targets (PTA\_3)

TEF data highlights that the College's performance for continuation of students from low participation neighbourhoods (PTS\_1), full time female students (PTS\_2) and mature students (PTS\_3) is below benchmark and will be addressed.

Work to address the gap in progression for students from low participation neighbourhoods (PTP\_1) and full time male students will be underpinned by improvement of internal management information systems to enable regular and systematic monitoring of performance. Increased support from the careers guidance team will be a feature of the plan to improve progression to employment.

## 2.2 Aims and objectives

This access and participation plan addresses each of the five underrepresented groups at one or more stages of the lifecycle. In all cases, where a negative gap exists between the College and national data, the College commits to deliver and build upon our ambition thereby eradicating the gap by the final year of this plan, 2024-25.

**Low Participation Neighbourhood Aim:** - To improve the continuation of FT LPN students and thereby reduce the continuation gap between FT POLAR4 quintiles 3-5 and POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2. To improve the progression to employment of FT LPN students and close the gap between College and national outcomes.

*Measurable Objective:* Improve continuation of FT POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 students by 9% by monitoring students' continuation rates at programme and College level disaggregated by POLAR4 quintile status. All FT LPN students will have mandatory individual tutorials with both academic and pastoral staff. This is to ensure they have all relevant information and are encouraged to access, where appropriate, the full and extensive range of College support services available to them. FT LPN students' continuation improved by 12% within the 5 years of this APP action plan.

**BAME students aim:** - To increase recruitment of students from BAME backgrounds further increasing the current positive gap between College performance and national benchmark.

**Disabled students:** - To increase recruitment of disabled students further increasing the positive gap between College performance and national benchmark.

**Care leavers:** - Establish systems to capture care leaver information in order to be able to monitor access and achieve DfE and social justice target.

*Multiple measurable objective* – Increase recruitment of disabled, BAME and care leavers to 2.4%, 2.6% and 0.5% respectively through targeted marketing with the use of positive case studies and UCAS membership within 5 years of this APP.

**Mature students aim:** - To improve continuation rates of mature students and close fully the gap between College and national rates.

*Measurable objective* – Improve continuation of mature students by 5.3% by regular monitoring and increased individual tutorials to quickly identify when a student is at risk of non-continuation and allocate appropriate support mechanisms to avoid this. These may be financial, academic support, emotional / counselling support. Student surveys and focus groups will be used to identify at an early stage more generic issues.

**Gender aim:** - To improve continuation rates of full time female students closing the gap between College and national rates. To improve the progression to employment of full time males to close the gap between College and national rates.

*Measurable objective* - Increase continuation of FT female students to 83.1%, and thereby eliminate the gap between national rates for females and the College, by identifying students at risk of withdrawal through our 'At Risk' register and implementing appropriate intervention strategies managed by curriculum managers and programme leads.

To deliver and build upon our ambition within our 2020-2021 Access and Participation Plan we will continue to invest in evidence-led research and evaluation which identifies the challenges for students from underrepresented groups. Our overarching strategic aims in respect of the delivery of equality of opportunity and outcomes for HE students are:

- to put in place evidence-based processes to attract care leavers into HE and to encourage disclosure of care leaver status to enable students to be fully supported across their HE courses and into employment or further study;
- to further develop and maintain robust and reliable management information systems that align with OfS and HESA including low participation neighbourhoods characterised by POLAR4 and IMD data and progression data informed by the DLHE outcomes;
- to improve retention of FT students from low participation neighbourhoods through targeted academic and pastoral tutorials to provide continuous support across their HE courses using financial support where this is identified as a barrier to continuation;
- undertake further research with identified student groups including those from low participation neighbourhoods and females to improve evidence base and better targeted support mechanisms to improve retention;
- undertake further research to identify targeted approaches to improve full-time male progression to employment or further study.

### **3. Strategic measures**

#### **3.1 Whole provider strategic approach**

##### Overview

The College Access and Participation Plan is embedded in the College approach to management of its higher education provision.

Oversight of Higher Education at the College rests with the Academic Board, operating under the authority delegated to it by the Board of Governors. The Chair of Academic Board reports to the full Governing Body and its sub-committees throughout their meeting cycle. Key HE activities, including the implementation of this Access and Participation Plan, are included in these reports.

The College HE Strategy is a sub-strategy of the College Strategic Plan and focusses upon addressing the specific needs of the area, including the issues outlined in the introduction to this plan. Central to this strategy is to create a portfolio of programmes of study that are designed to support student progression into higher education and successful progression to further study or employment.

The aims of the HE strategy are to:

- Develop a higher education portfolio that leads to positive vocational outcomes for all students.
- Provide a flexible HE portfolio that represents good value for money for all students.
- Maintain a high level of quality, both in terms of delivery, student outcomes and resources.
- Maintain positive growth in HE numbers through continuous programme development and review
- Engage effectively with students in all aspects of HE policy and process.

Given the socio-economic structure of the County Durham, and the profile of the higher education student body at the College, the strategy supports students throughout their lifecycle. The investment outlined in this plan is designed to continue to underpin the strategy and support all students, particularly those from under-represented groups.

### *Inclusion Strategy*

Bishop Auckland College made a commitment in 2019/20 to ensure it was inclusive in all areas of its work, with all its stakeholders, the community and throughout the student lifecycle. The College has developed a dedicated inclusion Action Plan which is a sub-section of the whole college Quality Improvement Action Plan. Good progress is being made in implementing the action plan.

### *Marketing Strategy*

The College's Marketing Strategy and also the curriculum development process is rooted in providing an articulated progression route in each curriculum area from entry level to higher education. The gap analysis carried out each year considers recruitment, non-continuation and achievement of students. The action plan drawn from this gap analysis informs the marketing plan and leads to targeted campaigns whilst linking with current events such as the International Women in Engineering Day. Recruitment does currently evidence the traditional gender bias associated with certain vocational areas however the Marketing Strategy addresses these stereotypes and progress can be seen with recruitment of females to engineering and males in the early years programme. The College caters well to the needs of mature learners and recruitment of this cohort is strong. Programmes are timetabled to meet the requirements of employed students and those with childcare responsibilities as well as younger students. The College has attracted a low proportion of BME students historically, however the proportion does mirror the local demographic profile. The Marketing Strategy identifies the importance of attracting students from all ethnic backgrounds and use of positive images and case studies is made to broaden its appeal to all. A wide range of marketing media is used, again to broaden reach and attract a diverse population.

### *Equality and Diversity Policy*

Bishop Auckland College is committed to the development of non-discriminatory policies and practices providing an environment in which there is equality of opportunity for members of its community, whether required by legislation or not, in all aspects of its activities as an employer and a provider of education.

The Equality Statement and Policy applies to Governors, staff and students of the College which incorporates South West Durham Training Ltd and also includes partners, volunteers and visitors or contractors working in college sites. The Equality Statement and Policy sets out the College's commitment and intent as an equal and diverse employer and as a provider of education and training.

The Equality and Diversity Statement and Policy is reviewed regularly and at least annually to ensure up it reflects changes in legislation and their effective implementation.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group takes the lead on ensuring compliance with the expectations of the Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

All College services, programmes and operations, reflect a commitment to and implementation of, equality, diversity and inclusion. This commitment is reflected in the College's core values of caring, ambition, respect, equality, excellence and resilience. The approach to the management of equality and diversity is monitored and reported upon by the Director of Service Standards. All reports on College activity relating to equality and diversity are reported to the Governing Body through the Equality and Diversity Committee.

The College aims to be a leading organisation in the promotion of equality and diversity and acknowledges that equality of opportunity and the recognition and promotion of diversity, are integral to its success.

Bishop Auckland College recognises its legal and moral obligations to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Key to meeting these obligations and supporting student success on programme, is the removal of barriers to engaging with the support and expertise outlined in 3.1.1. The range of additional financial support provided through this plan, will assist in facilitating this action by removing some of the barriers to attendance that students face because of financial hardship. This includes:

- Bursaries
- Hardship payments
- Professional accreditation fees
- Subsidised meals in the College catering facilities
- Payment of costs associated with trips and visits
- Standard minimum levels of teaching and academic support for all students which are above the sector average regardless of subject.

### 3.1.1 The curriculum, pedagogic and student support developments

To ensure that all students are supported effectively, the standard HE teaching model is built around a combination of formal scheduled teaching and tutorial support. The benefit of this model is that the tutorial support sessions ensure that students receive the level of support that they need and require, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic group, background or other characteristic. For those students who occasionally have difficulty attending taught sessions, particularly those in work and studying part-time, the same level of academic support is provided via the College VLE. The delivery model is underpinned by a range of additional support and resources, provided by specialist teams across the College business support areas, this includes; student services; finance; the Learning

Resource Centre; careers guidance team. Moving forward, additional investment will be focussed on providing extra staff resource to all of these areas to support student continuation and attainment.

Bishop Auckland College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy (TLA) embraces both further and higher education delivery within a single document. The policy is designed to guide staff to provide the highest quality of TLA to all students. It reflects the dimensions of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF). Underpinning this process is a requirement for all staff to hold PGCE qualifications. Bishop Auckland College recognises that as a vocational college 'dual professionalism' is essential to ensure students are supported by staff with high quality current industry knowledge and skills. Consequently the College is committed to supporting staff to become qualified teachers where they have been recruited directly from an industry setting. Additionally Bishop Auckland College supports staff to continue their own professional development and study at masters and doctorate level to further enhance the experience of our students. HE delivery staff are supported to apply for HEA Fellowship. The principal strategic aims of this APP are to improve continuation rates and progression to employment, consequently, the approach to learning and support for all HE students and in particular those in target groups, will be an important element in the approach to delivering the stated strategic aims of this APP.

As identified in 3.1.2, further support will be channelled to support students from 2020/21 to build on the success of the current model, particularly providing additional staff time for student support.

The Head of Teacher Development and the Head of Quality and Higher Education will be involved in the Working Group tasked with addressing the objectives outlined in the APP Strategy. The lessons learned from the outcomes of the Working Group activity, will be used to inform future development of the HE teaching and learning process.

### 3.1.2 Employment and skills development and collaboration with other bodies

Bishop Auckland College has demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of raising participation in higher education, particularly amongst the target groups identified in this plan and targeted by the Office for Students. This activity will continue to be a key element of the annual cycle of activity undertaken by the College Admissions and Schools Team. This team ensures that impartial careers information and guidance is provided to both prospective students and appropriate gatekeepers (e.g. schools and advisors) on the range of support available to students with protected characteristics. Included in this activity are;

- An annual programme of outreach visits to local feeder institutions to establish early links and raise aspirations and targets.
- An annual programme of Taster Days targeted at supporting and encouraging application.
- Open events where target students have the opportunity to visit the College and speak to academic staff and employers to explore the range of career opportunities available through specific study paths
- Taster events where target students can gain valuable insight into what HE study in a College environment is like.
- Individual careers guidance sessions and support with job applications and career planning
- Interview practice with an employer

The College Strategic Plan is designed to meet the needs and expectations of all students regardless of background or profile. It is also designed to address the specific concerns raised by prospective students when considering the relative merits of choosing further study over seeking employment. This

plan reflects these values and is underpinned by the College Higher Education Strategy which uses employability outcomes as a tool to removing barriers to participation in the area. The evidence of the Colleges achievements in this respect provides a powerful message to potential students and raises participation rates. This alignment also supports and encourages students to recognise the value of continuing with their studies. Investment in relationship building with employers through a range of initiatives, including;

- Aligning programme development to labour market intelligence to support student progression into graduate employment.
- Embedding professional qualifications into higher awards to support direct progression to employment upon graduation.
- Inviting high profile employers to deliver masterclasses as an element of programmes.
- Ensuring all HE students take part in a good quality work placement.

While the above activity will be maintained moving forwards, the focus of investment will move marginally more towards supporting students in their studies.

### 3.1.3 Alignment with other work

The College's work through the Future Me project has enabled a focus on those FE students who are capable of progressing to HE but are unlikely to do so; typically white working class boys and more broadly those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods which broadly describes the College's catchment area. The barriers communicated by these potential students are a combination of real and perceived barriers; this plan is devised to counteract those barriers. This plan draws on information from the TEF metrics, NSS, HEIFIS, marketing research and student feedback and aligns with the College's HE Strategy, Marketing Strategy and the Group Strategic Plan.

## 3.2 Student consultation

### Student Consultation and involvement

The College is committed to the full consultation of its students in relation to all aspects of their experience at the College. All courses have an elected student representative for each year group, who are invited to course team meetings as a representative of the cohort. All student course representatives are invited to attend termly cross college representative meetings which are chaired by the Principal. Students elect the Student President and Deputy annually and together with the Principal, they make up the Student Leadership Team. This small but extremely important group discuss key issues and agree actions.

The programme of formal College meetings, Equality and Diversity Working Group, Marketing Working Group, IT Working Group, HE Quality and Standards Working Group and Corporate Board also include student representation. The Student Representative is a named elected member and is invited to attend all meetings or to submit items for discussion.

The Student President receives an honorarium supported by the College and is an annually elected position. The Student President is supported by a deputy and a team of student ambassadors drawn from across the student population.

In accordance with the policy on student consultation, this Access and Participation Plan has been made available to all HE students via the College VLE. In addition, student representatives have been



provided with a copy and invited to comment. The Student President and student representatives provide the College with the College with a means to consult with the entire student population.

### 3.3 Evaluation strategy

#### Evaluation

##### *How will we evaluate our performance?*

We will use a variety of data and information sources to evaluate the success of our activities including continuation data, student feedback, NSS data, TEF data, and NCOP results. Progress against each of the metrics will be compared year on year to provide a rich source of longitudinal data, both quantitative and qualitative to identify trends and highlight areas for future focus.

##### *How will this influence future plans?*

The outcomes of the evaluation will form the basis of the annual improvement plan, with targets set and reviewed regularly throughout the year. Financial budgets will be set to ensure that resource, staffing or revenue, is directed at bringing about improvements, if any improvement targets have not been achieved. Student involvement will be encouraged to ensure that plans are sensible and appropriate.

##### *How will outcomes be shared?*

The College publishes its performance data on its website; it displays 'you said, we did' information around the College to share the results of student feedback and the actions taken by the College to achieve the desired improvement. Opportunities for sharing learning are embraced both regionally and nationally through the Association of Colleges HE in FE network, NCOP groups and with partner providers. Staff will continue to present the results of research projects regionally and nationally and work with partner colleges to both learn from others and share successful strategies.

The approach to evaluating this strategy will take place both during the life of the plan as well as at the end. It is anticipated that by maintaining this level of scrutiny, any lessons learned and issues that emerge, will be picked up in a timely manner and fed back into the process to improve the final outcome. In addition to the College data and TEF4 used to inform this plan, the targets will be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with the OfS dataset.

Evaluation will take place across the life of the plan at three points annually. The process of evaluating this strategy will be the responsibility of HE Curriculum and Quality Working group following the intended chronology of the strategy. While the current approaches to supporting students throughout their lifecycle are considered to be effective and are well received by students, the intention is to build on past success and ensure that outcomes for all students across their lifecycle are positive. The implementation of any new actions taken by the College as a result of the work undertaken by the Working Group, will be the responsibility of the Head of Quality and Higher Education. In all instances, the findings will be continuously evaluated to ensure that any lessons learned or good practice identified, is reflected in and embedded across;

- The HE strategy
- Programme design
- Outreach activity
- Academic and additional support mechanisms
- Financial support
- Other specialist and general student support.

As well as ensuring that the stated targets are achieved, the evaluation process will also be used to consider the performance of the College relative to the sector as a whole.

As the size and profile of the HE student body changes in line with planned growth, it will be important to ensure that the current mechanisms in place remain effective at evaluating performance against plan and the HE Quality and Standards Working group keeps the growth of higher education at the College under review and identifies any essential increases in scale of operation.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Comparative assessment of student performance and outcomes will be based on College data throughout the year and using externally produced data annually. The College operates a process of analysing student data at 3 points in the year using a combination of current student performance in assessment (formative and summative). The data provided is analysed according to the target outcome.

Each of the target groups will be evaluated against the following criteria;

- Performance relative to the current position;
- Performance relative to the student body as a whole;
- Performance relative to students without the protected characteristic that is the focus of the plan;
- Performance relative to the target outcomes.

The data will be collected by the Registry Team to ensure that comparisons are consistent.

### *Qualitative analysis*

The size of the HE student body at the College and in particular the size of the target groups of this plan, will make meaningful statistical analysis difficult. While a numerical measure will continue to be used to support decision making, the current forms of evaluating the effectiveness of measures to support students will form an integral and important part of the evaluation process.

Survey Tools - The current range of survey tools employed by the College will continue to be used to assist in assessing factors that affect academic performance. Specifically, module evaluation questionnaires and student satisfaction surveys. However, while the output from these surveys will provide some insight into general student perceptions, it will be limited to the views of the student population rather than the target groups.

In addition to the current range of survey tools, an additional survey will be added to any support processes accessed by students with protected characteristics, such as financial support, disability support, etc. All students that access these services, will be asked to participate in a satisfaction survey to identify their perceptions on whether the model meets their needs effectively. Selection of students for these groups will be based on College records as well as those that self-declare membership of the group.

Interview Tools - To address the specific challenge of the small data sets associated with the target groups, the College will utilise a series of focus groups with students from these groups. The approach

to data gathering will utilise a semi-structured interview, using the questions from the standard College survey tools as a basis. This will enable comparison with the student body as a whole and will provide useful guidance on how effective these tools are at indicating student perceptions regardless of characteristic.

The interviews will also provide the opportunity to identify whether there are any specific aspects of the characteristic of the target group that are being overlooked by the survey tools. This information will be gathered through discussion to identify what in addition could be done to enhance student satisfaction in the areas identified in the survey.

Informal Feedback - The range of fora provided for informal student feedback will continue to be utilised to gather any ad-hoc data on student views and perceptions. It is anticipated that this approach will be important in addressing any gaps in information that may arise from the methodologies outlined above.

In each of the above approaches, the survey will focus upon the specific activities designed to support each aspect of the student lifecycle to provide the College with an understanding of the efficacy of the steps taken to support access, success and progression.

### **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

#### Engagement of the governing body

The Governing Body understands its responsibility of ensuring the College continues to comply with all the ongoing OfS conditions of registration and has monitored closely the development of the College's current assessment of performance. The governors work closely with senior managers to ensure the registration conditions are adhered to, including ensuring that senior management and relevant staff monitor progress against improvements to continuation rates for other undergraduate programmes (Condition B1). The College will monitor its Access and Participation Plan milestones and targets three times a year. Progress against agreed milestones and targets will be reported to the College's Higher Education Quality and Standards Working Group (HEQSWG), comprising governors, the Principal, staff and students. HEQSWG convenes once per term with the Access and Participation measures being a standing agenda item.

#### Student Engagement in Monitoring Progress

Student representatives have worked in partnership with staff and students at course, curriculum area and College level to facilitate student engagement in the development of this Access and Participation Plan. This has included providing training and support for nominated student representatives, attendance at the HE Student Forum and coordination of consultation activities such as promoting our widening participation strategies.

Who at the provider is responsible for monitoring and how monitoring is embedded across the provider?

The responsibility for progress measures set out in this APP is shared across the College, with overall responsibility given to the Vice Principal – curriculum and quality and the Principal, as the Accountable Officer. The Head of Quality and HE is responsible for driving forward the commitments and targets set out in this Plan and providing termly monitoring reports for consideration by the College Senior Leadership and Management Team, HEQSWG and the College governors. SLMT is made up of the Principal and senior managers from across college and meets monthly to monitor academic and

business performance against targets set out in the College's strategic plan. The College has, for a number of years, closely monitored application and recruitment data, and this will continue in 2020/21. Access measures are monitored via the HE Strategy Group (chaired by the Principal) to ensure that applications, particularly from students in low participation neighbourhoods, continue to grow in line with the College's WP aims and objectives. Heads of School along with Course Leaders report their student progress data termly (continuation and attainment) at Course Performance Reviews (held three times a year). Data is reported for all students including those from underrepresented groups. From these meetings, good practice is shared across academic teams and interventions (when required) are actioned and dealt with in a timely manner to ensure robust strategies for improvement and gaps are identified, addressed and actions documented. Both the analysis and progress against any interventions are monitored closely against College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by governors at the HEQSWG and senior management at SLMT. Curriculum Managers report their student progression data via the College's Prosolution system (the College's management information system) and at HE Quality Reviews. This enables the College to evaluate how effective our early intervention strategies are for support and allows the College to monitor any gaps. This monitoring approach will be further enhanced by recording and identifying this data by protected characteristic and underrepresented groups. The above monitoring arrangements enable senior managers and governors to identify whether the progress and targets contained in the Access and Participation Plan are being met, and where appropriate, to agree additional measures to ensure that these actions and targets will be achieved.

## **1. Provision of information to students**

The College manages and monitors the information provided to students through the HE Quality and Standards Working Group. This ensures that information provided to students is accurate, timely and consistent. A student representative sits on the Working Group.

The Group reviews the content of all web and print based communications to ensure they are accurate, fit for purpose and comply with legal requirements. Specifically this includes all information on:

- Course content, structure and length, location of study and the award made on successful completion
- Total cost of the course, including tuition fees and any essential costs
- Information relating to the payment of bursaries or other financial support
- Ensuring that students have access to all relevant policies both prior to application and after enrolment explaining what they will be charged for
- Arrangements for payment and rights of cancellation
- Complaints handling

All College staff engaged in any part of the recruitment process including those making offers to prospective students are trained in how to manage the process. They are aware of the importance of information being provided in an accurate, clear and timely fashion and the requirement that advice and guidance must be accurate and impartial. They are aware that information provided at this stage can influence student's decisions and consequently form part of the contract between the student and the College.

The College commits to maintaining the level of fee advertised at the time of enrolment and does not increase fees on an annual basis in line with inflation. Fees are explained in the College Fee Policy

The College is committed to publishing clear, accurate and accessible information (as set out in OfS Condition F1), including fees, financial costs and the financial support available. The College ensures that staff providing financial advice to prospective and current students are fully informed of the financial implications for students at this institution and are able to advise students accurately and comprehensively. The College ensures its entry requirements, course information and modes of study are accurate and accessible to both existing and prospective students. This information is published on the College's website via its HE page. The College also promotes a range of HE communications, including social media and printed media to refer students to the relevant HE information. The College ensures compliance with good practice on categories of information published on the website. The information provided to students is guided by the principles of accuracy, accessibility, clarity, timeliness and completeness. The College provides such information to UCAS and to the SLC in a timely fashion for incorporation in their databases each academic year, via our Course Management System, allowing students to begin applying for student finance. This ensures compliance to mandatory information required in relation to our Key Information Sets and Wider Information Sets. The College is committed to continuing to monitor and review information to ensure compliance with Consumer Protection Law as recommended by the Competition and Markets Authority.

**The approved Access and Participation Plan will be published on the College website within the higher education section.**

## **5. Appendix**

# Access and participation plan

## Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: Bishop Auckland College

Provider UKPRN: 10000720

### Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

\*course type not listed

#### Inflationary statement:

We do not intend to raise fees annually

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£7,500
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£7,500
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Engineering	£2,450
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan

## 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Bishop Auckland College

Provider UKPRN: 10000720

### Investment summary

The OFS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

#### Note about the data:

The figures in Table 4a relate to all expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education. The figures in Table 4b only relate to the expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education which is funded by higher fee income. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£55,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00	£62,500.00	£65,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Access (post-16)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£12,500.00	£15,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00
Access (other)	£15,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£54,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00	£63,500.00	£66,500.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£120,150.00	£133,500.00	£133,500.00	£140,175.00	£146,850.00
<b>Access investment</b>	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%
<b>Financial support</b>	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	74.9%	74.9%	74.9%	74.9%	74.9%



